DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 192 509 EC 130 171

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TITLE Special Education: More Than a State of Mind.
INSTITUTION Colorado State Dept. of Education, Denver.; Southwest Regional Resource Center, Salt Lake City, Utah.
SPONS AGENCY Bureau of Education for the Handicapped (DHEW/OE), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE Jun 79
CONTRACT 300-78-0016
NOTE 13p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Ancillary School Services; *Compliance (Legal); Costs; *Disabilities; Elementary Secondary Education; *Program Evaluation; *Special Education; *State Programs
IDENTIFIERS *Colorado

ABSTRACT

The handbook details Colorado's educational services to handicapped students and discusses the state's progress (1977-78 fiscal year) in insuring appropriate education as required by the 1973 Handicapped Children's Educational Act. Sections briefly address the following topics: the student (number and age range identified); the staff (total number of special education staff, student-teacher ratio, and role of ancillary service staff); the service (including resource rooms, self contained classes, and work study programs); the cost (per student expenditure); and the Colorado administrative unit. (CL)

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SPECIAL EDUCATION MORE THAN A STATE OF MIND

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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Contract No. OEC-300-78-0016
Bureau of Education for the Handicapped
Department of Health, Education and Welfare

INTRODUCTION

Colorado has long had a reputation for its progressive stance in the discovery and thoughtful development of its natural resources. At the top of a list that might include solar, mineral and recreational resources, stands Colorado's most important resource of all—its children. In this, the International Year of the Child, the Colorado Department of Education takes a look at what it has done over the past year for the special portion of the child population, handicapped children.

In 1973, Colorado passed the Handicapped Children's Educational Act. The purpose of this act was to insure that handicapped children in Colorado be taught in ways appropriate to their handicaps, yet as close as possible to the mainstream of regular education.

This summary of a report by the Colorado Department of Education indicates just how far Colorado has come, in the 1977-78 fiscal year, toward realizing the goals of its Handicapped Children's Educational Act and subsequent amendments.*

*The complete report entitled **Status Report: Education of the Handicapped Student, School Year 1977-78,** is available through the Colorado Department of Education, 201 East Colfax Avenue, Denver, Colorado 80203.

THE STUDENT

The teacher whispered, he was sure of that. On the first day of class he was assigned a seat toward the back of the classroom. He had been excited about going to school like his brother and sister had before him, but the dazzle soon wore off. He couldn't hear the teacher's directions and when he asked her to repeat them again and again, she became frustrated. His grades were poor and soon school became pain rather than pleasure. Within a month he had but one desire, to get out and to stay out.

The Colorado Department of Education has become aware of the plight not only of the hearing handicapped, but also that of students with other physical and mental handicaps. It is taking determined strides to locate handicapped students in the state in order to provide them with programs that might enhance rather than stifle their learning experience.

In the 1977-78 school year, **53,409,** or 10.2 percent of the 524,155 students who were reported in average daily attendance in Colorado public schools, were identified as handicapped.

Handicapped students are those **between the ages of 5 and 21** who have one or more handicapping conditions which interfere with their ability to function in and benefit from a regular education program. These conditions might be a hearing disorder, a visual disorder, a physical impairment, a perceptual disorder, a speech disorder, an emotional handicap, or retardation.

Handicapped students are reported annually to the Colorado Department of Education only by their primary handicapping condition although many also have secondary disorders. For example, a student whose primary handicapping condition is due to significant retardation may also have a speech disorder. Educational agencies in Colorado use **professionals from many disciplines to provide comprehensive, individualized programs for handicapped students to meet their many needs.**

THE STAFF

Find a person who can paint a masterpiece, sculpture a classic figure and design a building that will endure throughout history and you will have found the Renaissance man. Find a teacher who alone can handle the myriad elements necessary to educate a severely handicapped child within a regular education program and you will have found the Renaissance teacher. Unfortunately, both exist in fairly limited quantities.

Realizing the need to support the education of handicapped students, Colorado's local educational agencies employed **4630 specially trained teachers, aides and support staff** to help educate the handicapped in the Rocky Mountain state. A further breakdown of this total number of special education employees shows that 2,783 teachers, 675 aides, and 1,172 support staff worked with the handicapped on a full-time basis in the 1977-78 school year. This was a 7.6 percent increase in the number of staff from the previous school year. Of the positions added, the majority were for direct service to the student rather than for administrative services.

To meet the multiple educational needs of handicapped students, an average of **one special education staff person was needed for every 12 handicapped students** as compared to one for every 14 during the previous school year.

Professionals from various related support disciplines were required to insure that handicapped students could benefit from the learning environment available through the public schools. These professionals included psychologists, social workers, occupational therapists, physical therapists, audiologists and nurses. Classroom aides helped students who needed support to function in a regular classroom as well as those students so severely handicapped they needed assistance so that they could be served in a public school special education program. Together, related support services staff and the specially trained teachers worked to improve educational programs for Colorado's handicapped students.

THE SERVICE

Sunshine warms the desert plain and sagebrush thrives. Cold winds thread through mountain passes and test the flexibility of branches as the alpine spruce grows stronger. One environment differs from the other, yet each is best for the organism it serves. So, too, do different learning environments best serve the particular handicaps of exceptional children.

The Colorado Department of Education wants to educate the handicapped in the **least restrictive setting** that is appropriate. This means bringing the handicapped closer to a normal lifestyle as society knows it. In the 1977-78 school year, Colorado accomplished this through several methods.

When handicapped students remained in the regular classroom, where their educational program was the responsibility of the regular teacher, **consultive assistance** was provided to the teacher by special education personnel or when needed, supplementary help related to the student's condition was given by special education personnel.

As special service needs increased, Colorado served its students in the following ways:

Resource services, where the student received special instruction for a portion of the school day in addition to his or her regular classroom program. Both special and regular education teachers shared the responsibility for educating the student.

Self-contained special classrooms, where the student received special instructional programs and the resources of regular education were used to supplement his or her special education.

Home or hospital service, where students with handicapping conditions so severe that they couldn't attend a public school were taught by special education teachers within the settings where they were confined.

Work experience-and-study programs, where the handicapped student received supervised on-the-job experience as a portion of his or her special education program.

During the 1977-78 school year, the Colorado Department of Education worked closely with local public schools in activities designed to locate and identify the handicapped between birth and 21 years of age. The Department trained educators in locating these handicapped children and youth and provided consultive assistance to teachers and other special education personnel who wrote **individualized education programs for all handicapped students** who received service in Colorado.

The state continued its practice of monitoring special education programs on the local level once every three years. It also wrote and had approved a comprehensive state plan to provide services required by the federal Education of the Handicapped Act (Public Law 94-142). Due process procedures, or the method of handling differences of opinion between the parent and school, were developed and put to use at the local administrative level.

The Colorado Department of Education also provided necessary leadership to other state institutions on educating the handicapped in the best possible environment. A great deal of progress was made during the 1977-78 school year in successfully bringing special education services to the students rather than sending the student to another locale for those services. All of these programs were designed to accomplish one thing—**to create the most positive and comprehensive educational program for the handicapped, as close to the mainstream of regular education as possible.**

THE COST

Braille books won't shine as much as new band uniforms to children who know the sunlight. Nor will a wheelchair ramp produce the same excitement as a football game to those with full mobility. But study a blind child's smile when she learns to read, or the intensity of a paraplegic as he wheels up into school and you will realize that they too are achieving a fulfillment that is their right.

Colorado's public schools spent 7.2 percent, **$71,682,369,** of their total operating dollars to meet the special educational needs of handicapped students during the 1977-78 school year. These dollars were in addition to the cost of regular education for the handicapped students. These special dollars were used to hire special education teachers and specially skilled professionals such as psychologists, social workers, occupational therapists, physical therapists, audiologists, and nurses. In addition, these dollars provided for specially designed materials and equipment used in the instructional programs, special transportation for handicapped students, and supervisors of special education services.

Compared to the previous year, the cost to educate the handicapped in Colorado in 1977-78 increased 8.2 percent. Special education was affected by inflation in the same way groceries, cars or any items on the market were affected. About half the increase in special education costs was due to inflation. The other half came from **Colorado's commitment to provide handicapped students with comprehensive educational programs.**

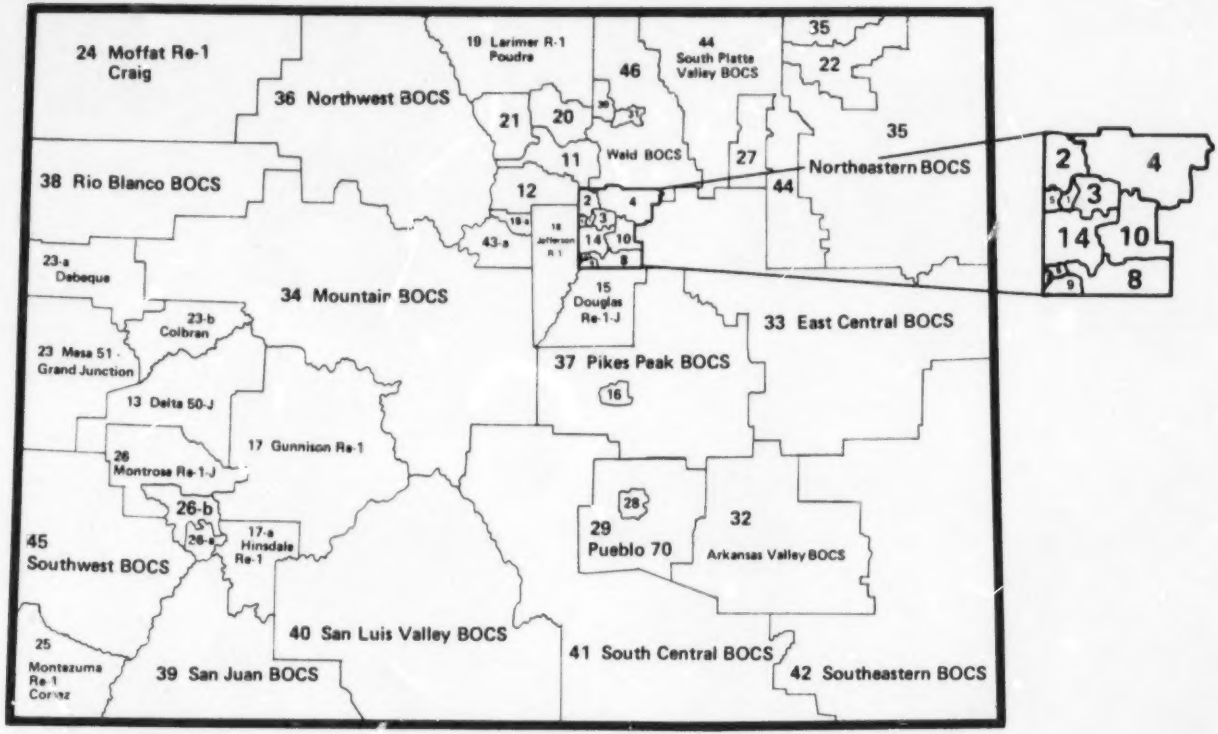
To provide these special education services that handicapped students required in order to learn, public schools spent **an average of $1,342 per student** in addition to the cost of their education received through regular programs. Three percent of the dollars, or $2,115,405, was received from federal sources and 44.2 percent was received from the state appropriation supporting the state's Handicapped Children's Educational Act. The remaining 52.8 percent came from local district sources and dollars provided for general aid to education.

THE COLORADO ADMINISTRATIVE UNIT

Administrative units under the Colorado Department of Education are striving to meet the intent of Colorado's Handicapped Children's Educational Act. These 46 units serve all handicapped students between the ages of 5 and 21 in the least restrictive environment, close to the mainstream of regular education and without sending students away from home to programs served under other agencies.

Within the 46 administrative units, 181 school districts are served. Each administrative unit consists of an individual school district, or, where districts are smaller, a group of school districts. Of the 46 administrative units, 31 served individual school districts and 15 served multidistricts. The administrative districts named and numbered below correlate with the districts numbered on the map:

COLORADO'S FORTY SIX SPECIAL EDUCATION ADMINISTRATIVE UNITS, 1977-78



1 Adams 1, Mapleton
2 Adams 12, Eastlake-Thornton-Northglenn
3 Adams 14, Commerce City
4 Adams 27J, Brighton
5 Adams 50, Westminster
6 Arapahoe 1, Englewood
7 Arapahoe 2, Sheridan
8 Arapahoe 5, Cherry Creek
9 Arapahoe 6, Littleton
10 Adams-Arapahoe 28J, Aurora
11 Boulder Re-1J, Longmont
12 Boulder Re-2J, Boulder
13 Delta 50J, Delta
14 Denver 1, Denver
15 Douglas Re-1J, Castle Rock
16 El Paso 11, Colorado Springs
17 Gunnison Re-1J, Gunnison
a. Hinsdale Re-1
18 Jefferson R-1, Lakewood
a. Gilpin Re-1
19 Larimer R-1, Poudre
20 Larimer R2J, Loveland
21 Larimer R3, Estes Park
22 Logan Re-1, Sterling
23 Mesa 51, Grand Junction
a. Mesa 49J, DeBeque
b. Mesa 50, Colbran
24 Moffat Re-1, Craig
25 Montezuma Re-1, Cortez
26 Montrose Re-1J, Montrose
a. Ouray R-1, Ouray
b. Ouray Re-2, Ridgway
27 Morgan Re-3, Fort Morgan
28 Pueblo 60, Pueblo (City)
29 Pueblo 70, Pueblo (Rural)
30 Weld Re-4, Windsor
31 Weld 6, Greeley
32 Arkansas Valley BOCS
33 East Central BOCS
34 Mountain BOCS
35 Northeastern BOCS
36 Northwest BOCS
37 Pikes Peak BOCS
38 Rio Blanco BOCS
39 San Juan BOCS
40 San Luis Valley BOCS
41 South Central BOCS
42 Southeastern BOCS
43 SEMBCS
Composed of: Arapahoe 1
Arapahoe 2
Arapahoe 5
Arapahoe 6
a. Clear Creek
44 South Platte Valley BOCS
45 Southwest BOCS
46 Weld BOCS